



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

September 30, 2004

TO: EQB Project List, Property Owners and Persons interested in the Xcel Energy 345 kV / 115 kV Transmission Line Project in Southwest Minnesota.

MEQB DOCKET NO. 03-73-TR-XCEL

RE: Notice of EIS Scoping Decision

On September 24, 2004 the Chair of the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) signed the Scoping Decision for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be completed on two new high-voltage transmission lines (HVTL) in Southwest Minnesota. Northern States Power Company, d/b/a Xcel Energy proposes to construct a 345 kV HVTL and associated facilities connecting the Split Rock Substation in Minnehaha County, South Dakota to the Lakefield Junction Substation in Jackson County, Minnesota. A new substation in Nobles County near Reading, Minnesota and a new 115 kV line from the new substation to the Chanarambie substation in Murray County (the Project) are included in this application. The Project is designed to increase electrical transmission outlet capability for the Buffalo Ridge area to allow for further development of wind energy in the region.

After an extensive public process, including an EIS and a contested case hearing, the EQB will issue a route-permit that specifies the final routes and structures Xcel Energy can use for the new transmission lines.

The EQB Scoping Decision determined the following three major issues regarding the EIS on the Project:

1. The routes, route-segments, and substation areas to be studied in the EIS;
2. The scope of the analysis to be completed in the EIS; and
3. The anticipated permit schedule.

The route segments to be studied in the EIS, and to those proposed by Xcel Energy, are shown in the attached Figure 1 and Figure 2 from the Scoping Decision. The anticipated permit schedule is also attached to this notice. Copies of the entire Scoping Decision are available by contacting Andrea at the EQB at 651-296-2571. The Scoping Decision and other information are also available at: <http://www.eqb.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=6466>. Also, any person may request to have his or her name or an organization's name placed on the project contact list by registering online at the EQB web site or by contacting Andrea at the EQB at 651-296-2571.

The Chair has designated EQB staff members John Wachtler as project manager and George Johnson as the public advisor in this matter. Inquiries about how to participate in the permit decision on this project should be directed to, George Johnson, (Tel: 651-296-2888 or george.johnson@state.mn.us) Environmental Quality Board, 300 Centennial Bldg., 658 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55155. Other contact information: Toll-Free Tel: 1-800-657-3794, Fax: 651-296-3698 or TTY: Minnesota Relay Service, 800-627-3529, and ask for the EQB.

Copies of the Permit Application, the Scoping Decision, and other information will also be available at the following public libraries after October 5, 2004: Rock County Community Library (Luverne), Adrian Library, Nobles County Library (Worthington), Jackson County Library (Lakefield), Fulda Memorial Library, Slayton Public Library and Chandler City Hall.

Appendix E

Time Line for Permitting Process

June 2004	Open House Meetings in: June 1, Lakefield American Legion; June 2, Wilmont Community Center; June 9, Chandler City Hall; June 10, Luverne Public Library.
July 2004	7/01/04 First Task Force Meeting, Reading MN 7/08/04 Second Task Force Meeting, Reading MN Route Criteria Listed 7/22/04 Third Task Force Meeting, Reading MN Draft Scoping Document Reviewed
August 15, 2004	Public Scoping Comment Period Deadline
September 2004	Final Scoping Document Approved by EQB Chair

Anticipated Time Line

Nov. 2004	“Check-in Meeting” – one night to check in with interested local citizens.
Dec. 2004	Draft EIS Released Draft EIS Public Information Meeting Draft EIS Submitted to Administrative Law Judge
Jan. 2005	Formal Hearing and Final Public Comment Period on EIS EQB Response to Comments on EIS
Feb. 2005	Administrative Law Judge Makes Recommendation To Environmental Quality Board
March 2005	Environmental Quality Board Reviews Comments on ALJ Report, Meets, and Issues Permit